



**Healthy Mothers,
Healthy Babies**
The Montana Coalition

**covering kids
& families**

To: Montana Covering Kids and Families Stakeholders
From: Mike Cooney
Executive Director
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-Montana
Date: July 28, 2004
RE: Back- to- School Covering Kids and Families Initiative

Again this year, Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies – The Montana Coalition (HMHB) in partnership with Covering Kids and Families is launching its annual Back-to-School enrollment drive. You will recall that this initiative encourages parents of uninsured children to make enrollment in CHIP or other low cost or free health care programs a top priority on their back-to-school checklists.

Why is this important?

Kids who have health care coverage are better prepared to learn in school. This needs to be a top priority for parents as they prepare to send their kids back to school. The coverage offered through CHIP and other low-cost or free health care coverage programs means health security for kids and peace of mind for parents.

Here in Montana it is estimated that over 20,000 Montana children are without health insurance and, as is the case across the country, most of these children are in families with working moms and dads. Coverage is offered through CHIP, Medicaid, The Caring Program for Children, The Montana Comprehensive Health Association (MCHA), Montana Youth Care, Montana Mental Health Services Plan and Children's Special Health Services. Many families are not aware that their children may qualify for coverage. In Montana, a family of four can earn up to \$28,275 a year or more and qualify for CHIP. Eligibility is based on family size and income. While the number of enrollees is limited and a waiting list exists, new enrollees are added every month. In Montana applicants on the waiting list currently receive coverage within a few months and all families are encouraged to apply to determine eligibility.

We are asking you to join HMHB to help educate parents about low cost and free health coverage programs. By calling our toll-free number (**1-800-421-6667**) you can get more information about the Back-to-School project and order free materials (bookmarks and cards) to distribute. These materials will provide information to parents on how to enroll their children in a low-cost or free health care program. The national kick-off will occur in Washington, DC on August 4, 2004. A Montana kick-off event will occur August 12 in Billings.

These efforts are part of a nationwide Back-to-School enrollment drive launched by Covering Kids and Families (CKF), a national initiative to connect uninsured children with low-cost and free health care coverage programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. CKF is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the largest philanthropy in the country dedicated exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans.

As you prepare for the new school year, please make our Back-to-School enrollment drive a part of your activities. Please help us provide information to parents so they can take the steps necessary to get their children enrolled in a health care program.

Please contact Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies at **1-800-421-6667** (in Helena 449-8611) or email Executive Director Mike Cooney at mcooney@hmhb-mt.org to order free materials or if you have any questions. If you would like to learn more about Covering Kids and Families please visit www.coveringkids.org directly.

The coverage offered through CHIP and the other low-cost or free health coverage programs helps keep Montana's kids healthy. I encourage you to help parents to find out if their kids are eligible.